

The *Blue Line*

Fairfax County Police Department

Fall 2001

A First Hand Perspective from the Pentagon

by PSC Lori Lewis



Fairfax One on the ground in front of the Pentagon on September 11.

Photo by Bob Pugh

Here is the personal account of the tragedy at the Pentagon by Lori Lewis. All thoughts and impressions are just that...one person's view of what happened.

9-12-01

As most everyone knows, I work for the Fairfax County 911 center as a call taker and police and fire dispatcher. I work the midnight shift and get off duty at 7 a.m. On 9-11, I was home from work

about three hours when I got called back - along with many of my co-workers. I worked for an additional four hours, then they made most of us midnight shift folks go home to get some sleep. It was pandemonium for us. I can only guess what it must have been like in New York City and Arlington County. We committed a large percentage of our resources to the disaster at the Pentagon, including our Fire and Rescue Department's internationally recognized Urban Search and Rescue Team.

They have assisted with major earthquakes in Turkey and Taiwan, as well as the bombings in Africa and Oklahoma.

When I went back in at 11 p.m. on 09-11, they told me I was going to the Pentagon to man our communications pod. We were parked 50 yards from the gaping hole in the Pentagon all night. The term used by the people working there for the area inside a temporary fence was "The Impact Zone." All the people working had a clear view of

(Continued on page 8)



Detective Doug Allen

OFFICERS RECEIVE AWARDS

Two officers assigned to the McLean District Station recently received recognition for their dedication and commitment to their careers and community.

Detective Doug Allen received the Louis Freeh award from the Federal Bureau of Investigation for his three year commitment to an investigation which led to the elimination of several "fencing" operations working in the D. C. Metropolitan area. During the spring of 1998, Detective Allen began investigating a rash of larcenies of glucose strips from area pharmacies. His investigation led to the arrest of a suspect a few months later. As a result of that arrest, Detective Allen received information about fencing operations in the Metropolitan area. Detective Allen turned the information he had learned over to the FBI. He went a step further and continued to assist them with their investigation. At the beginning of 2001, the FBI raided and took down numerous fencing operations, recovering in excess of 20 million dollars worth of property. Detective Allen was commended for his devotion to duty which led to the reduction of crime in the Tysons Corner area and elimination of many local black markets. Detective Allen is a 22 year veteran of law enforcement.



PFC Michael Koltz

Officer Michael Koltz received the Police Officer of the Year Award from the McLean-Tysons Corner Optimist Club. Officer Koltz enthusiastically embraces community policing and developing partnerships with businesses and citizens to reduce crime. Officer Koltz worked hand-in-hand with staff members of Supervisor Gerald Connolly's office, homeowners associations, zoning and Park Authority to clean up certain neighborhoods in the McLean District. He removed abandoned vehicles, and addressed loitering and illegal dumping complaints. Officer Koltz had new signs placed throughout the neighborhoods. Officer Koltz put a great deal of time and effort into resolving neighborhood matters, the true goal of community policing. Officer Koltz was honored for being a determined and conscientious officer who has a positive impact on the community he serves. Officer Koltz is a six year member of the department, after retiring from a 20 year military career.

E-mail from Germany

The following is an email received in Chief Manger's office just days after the September 11th terrorist attack.

Dear Chief Manger,

My name is Helmut Rucker. I am a police officer (Polizeikommissar) in Bonn, Germany. In 1983, I had the opportunity to visit an office of the Fairfax County Police Department when I visited my then-girlfriend. My girlfriend's father worked in Bonn in the United States Embassy. I was in my first two years as a police officer and I guarded the Embassy. Her father eventually returned to the United States and a position within the State Department. I gave his son, Michael a ride on my police tank. Michael became a police officer with your agency. I believe they lived in Burke.

But now I'll tell you some words of the ATTACK: We all, especially the police officers here in Germany, are shocked about this attack on your country. We are really sad that so many officers and other people lost their lives. I can tell you that all German people are really sad and shocked, too. Hundreds of thousands of people are in the streets and in the churches. All over here flags of the United States of America are hanging in windows. Millions of candles are burning in our towns. Our thoughts are with you. We all hope that we find those responsible!

I tried as well to send an e-mail to N.Y.P.D., but it seems to be impossible. I remembered my visit to Virginia and so I'll send you this message in memory of all the people and police officers who lost their lives on September 11 and later during the rescues. We are with you!

Sincerely Yours,

Police Officer Helmut Rucker



THOUGHTS FROM GROUND ZERO

a compilation from interviews by MPO Cheryl Farrell

“September 11th, oddly enough, is my birthday. It is also my wedding anniversary. I was on my day off. I was watching ‘The Today Show’ with my daughters when I heard the news about a plane crashing into the North Tower. As I continued to watch, I saw the second plane crash into the South Tower, and then heard the news about the Pentagon. I immediately thought about my cousin and one of my best friends. They both worked for Cantor Fitzgerald in the North Tower. I tried to call my cousin. All I got was a busy signal. They are both still missing.”



Surveying damage at Ground Zero.

Photo by APO Tim Scott

“I was in the middle of an expulsion hearing. I got a page about the North Tower from a buddy of mine. A short time later, I got a second page about the South Tower. When I got the third page about the plane crashing into the Pentagon, I told the school administrators I had to go. They had no idea what was going on in the world.”

“I was driving to work when the radio station announced a plane had struck one of the Twin Towers. In complete disbelief, I telephoned my mother long distance, knowing she would be by a television and be able to tell me what was going

on. I stayed on the telephone with her nearly my whole way to work. I learned about the second plane crashing into the South Tower from her over the telephone. I couldn’t get to work fast enough that day.”

September 11, 2001, just like the day Kennedy died, is one of those days that everyone will remember where they were when they heard the news of the terrorist attacks. The memory will be with each one of us for the rest of our lives and will be as vivid twenty years from now as it was at that moment. The news struck the public safety community particularly hard as we learned the extent of the damage and the number of law enforcement and fire and rescue personnel killed in the catastrophe.

There were those who suddenly realized a friend, a relative, a loved one was missing in the ruins of the World Trade Center. Several of our officers are from New York or the New York City area. It didn’t take long for many members of the Fairfax County Police Department to decide they couldn’t stand idly by. There was a community in New York in great need of the expertise and training we possess. And so, without being asked, they went. Without knowing what lay ahead, they went. They drove in vans, cars, and trucks. They rode on Amtrak. Some arrived as early as the day after. Some traveled with nothing but the clothes on their backs and borrowed money in their pockets. Some went with equipment and vehicles donated by local merchants. They arrived in New York City and immediately

set out for Ground Zero, all with the same goal in mind -- to help. The thoughts, impressions and experiences they gathered are as individual and diverse as each person who went, yet as collective and similar as the rescue effort at Ground Zero.

As they arrived at Ground Zero on September 12, they were handed helmets, gloves and respirators. They observed a huge crime scene, spanning more than one square mile of devastation. It was described as “controlled chaos.” Officers who had grown up in New York City surveyed the devastation and had trouble gaining their bearings. The area was unrecognizable. Was this where the roadway used to be? Where was the plaza? Where did the towers actually stand? Nearby abandoned businesses looked like a ghost town. Cups of coffee, bagels and newspapers were still in place on tables, left behind when people ran for their lives. Between Buildings Five and Six of the World Trade Center complex, there remained a three-foot wide section of marble walkway with steep voids on either side that rescue workers walked across to get to the dig sites. Should they slip and fall, they would become a victim as well. They knew they were tempting fate, but not one questioned their own safety. In fact, it never even crossed their minds. They simply felt the need to help. They lined up, shoulder to shoulder, and joined police and fire units from across North America in the world’s longest human assembly line. For endless hours, they moved millions of tons of steel and concrete and dust one five-

(Continued on page 5)



Rescue and recovery workers are dwarfed by mountains of steel..

Photo by APO Tim Scott



Recruits, Instructors Run For Kris

The Fairfax County Criminal Justice Academy 39th session participated in the third annual May Day 5k run to benefit Alexandria Police Officer Kris Gulden on May 5th at Cameron Run Regional Park. Approximately 40 recruits and academy staff members ran, and raised over \$2,000. Academy classes have participated in each year's run, and have been inspired by Kris. She was severely injured in a bicycle accident on the Fairfax County Parkway more than 3 years ago. She is an exceptional athlete, and was training for a triathlon. She is confined to a wheelchair as a paraplegic, and her condition has progressively deteriorated. Kris has needed several surgeries since her original accident, and has participated in experimental research and therapy in Florida. The costs are staggering, and she is very appreciative of the support of the law enforcement community. Each Academy class that has participated has run military formation style, with recruits acting as cadence callers. We have been the only group of such a size participating each year, and have been well received. It has truly been a motivational experience for all involved.

The Pollin Award

Second Lieutenant Frank Cresswell, who has been with the department for 26 years, received the Pollin Award for outstanding community service on November 9. He was chosen by the Washington Wizards and Papa John's Pizza for his dedication to community service. Lieutenant Cresswell has been a supervisor in the Youth Services Division for seven years. He has worked with Special Olympics, school safety patrols and coordinates women's self defense classes. He runs the Wizard's Kids n' Kops program in Fairfax County, encouraging positive relationships between police officers and youths. Lieutenant Cresswell is also involved with Heroes Incorporated. He received the award at the MCI Center at halftime during the Wizards basketball game against the Golden State Warriors. Congratulations, Lieutenant!



Second Lieutenant Frank Cresswell, flanked by Wizards guard Hubert Davis (#24) and Sashia Jones, Wizards Director of Community Relations.

THE FULLER ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

By Second Lieutenant Brian J. McAndrew,

MPO John Hommel of the Mason District Station was the Year 2000 recipient of the annual MPO KENNY FULLER AWARD. Created to honor the memory of MPO Kenny Fuller who was killed in an auto accident just six months after his retirement, the award honors Master Police Officers. These officers show the same dedication to the citizens of Fairfax County, adhere to the high ethical standards and display the same professional pride in their work that MPO Fuller did throughout his career.

The year 2000 marked the second time the Fuller Achievement Award had been given. It seemed especially appropriate that MPO Hommel received the award since he has been assigned to the Mason District Station for the bulk of his career, as had been MPO Fuller. A well-respected officer and nominated by his supervisor, Second Lt. Don Lenhart, MPO Hommel has been assigned to the Mason District Station since 1980. Since becoming a Field Training Officer in 1985, he has trained more than 15 officers and continues to be dedicated to the FTO program. He has received the Department's Meritorious Service Award as well as the Distinguished FTO Award. He continues to show his desire to help the Department maintain its high standards of professional excellence by participating in updating the FTO manual. He continues to train recruits, instilling in them the same professional characteristics that he has shown over the years.

Ron Stout, a very good friend of MPO Fuller, made the award and a cash grant possible. Retired from this department, Stout now works for Lo-Jack. Through the generosity of Lo-Jack, we are assured this award will be financed for some time to come.

Our congratulations to MPO Jimmy Wade, the Award's first recipient, as well as to MPO Hommel; they continue to show the dedication and professionalism that MPO Kenny Fuller did. It is officers of this caliber that make the Fairfax County Police Department the well known and well respected department it is.

You're in Good Hands

By Retired Detective Timothy A. Baumker

How does one write something to catch another's eye? How does one write so that others will want to read it? I'm not sure how to accomplish this as I can't include attractive pictures or announce a million-dollar give away. I just hope you'll give me a few minutes of your time.

November 17, 2000 was the worst day of my life. I was forced to retire from a job that *was* my life. About seven years ago, I noticed things happening to my body which were starting to present serious problems. I lost my ability to run, exercise or do anything strenuous for a sustained period of time without becoming exhausted. To make a long story short, I was diagnosed with severe and progressive Multiple Sclerosis. During the long medical procedures that followed, doctors also discovered I had diabetes. For the record, MS is a disease of the central nervous system which affects muscular coordination. The form of MS I have is rare. There is no cure. A wheelchair is very much in my future. I've told lies to people ("bad knee" or "hurt back") when they noticed I was walking funny and asked me what was wrong. In our polite society when someone asks a rhetorical question, they don't really want to know the truth.

Since the academy I've always felt immortal. I was never scared to do anything on the job. I always figured if I became disabled, it would be as a result of an on-the-job injury, perhaps a bad guy's bullet. My wife and I never imagined MS would be the bad guy to rob me of my livelihood. I also never imagined that my department would support my wife and me in a way that would bring such comfort to us during this tragic situation. There were so many officers, and supervisors supporting us that I can not even begin to mention their names. It is safe to say they represented the tone of the entire chain of command of our police department. To receive the outpouring of care and concern that I received was completely unexpected. I was always of the mind that the department didn't care about our pay or our shifts or us as employees. When I was diagnosed, I assumed my future was not only physically but professionally finished. There certainly wasn't anything special about me as an employee. I was a pretty decent cop during my various assignments, but what

went wrong with me wasn't the result of anything the department had done. I can't tell you the number of people who advised me to get a lawyer, call the union, all the things that were on my mind because of what my unexpected future held. When this happened to my wife and me, I could have kicked myself for not taking advantage of disability insurance, or life insurance but after all, I thought I was immortal.

In this world of frivolous law suits and press hounds who scream about how unfairly they have been treated, I ask you to give your department a chance. We will never, *ever* be paid the money we believe we deserve for what we do. None of us took this calling to become rich, but let's face it, we bring home a pretty good paycheck. Professional athletes kill me with their multi-million dollar salaries. Hand them a gun and a flashlight and have them check out a building at 0300 hours. Have them put themselves in harm's way routinely. Ask them what that is worth.

It is strange for me to no longer be a police officer, but I continue to be a part of the department as a civilian employee. Just something for you to think about, although I pray that no one else has a similar experience in their lives or career. We call ourselves a family. From my point of view, we truly are. How many times have you seen the members of our department be there for an employee who needed leave? How many times has a collection envelope been passed around for an officer in crisis?

I have written and re-written this article twenty times. The point of this isn't the demise of my health or my future. It is my love for and faith in the Fairfax County Police Department. I'm not ashamed or reluctant to say I love this department deeply and it has never, *ever* been "just a job" for me. I want to convey to you that regardless of your grunts and groans about this and that, the department *really does* care about you and your family.

One must be careful now-a-days about religion and political correctness. Let me just say in closing that whatever your convictions, without Pam and my strong faith I would not be here now typing this. I don't know what God has in store for me but I trust in whatever it is. I have that same strong belief in the department I love, simply because they have loved me back.

Thoughts (Continued from page 3)

gallon bucket at a time, searching for survivors, searching for human remains. Sometimes, one might find a bit of jewelry, a piece of collar brass, a hat, a helmet or a shoe. Knowing a body was nearby, the digging would slow to an excruciating, deliberate pace, so as to recover and remove that body with as much dignity and respect as was deserved. As bodies of firefighters and police officers surfaced from the rubble, the digging would stop completely. The bucket line suddenly transformed into an honor detail. The bodies were placed in a litter and draped with the American flag. A chaplain prayed over the body and the victim was lifted by a crane from the dig site to the "pall bearers." The shoulder-to-shoulder detail of personnel from worldwide public safety agencies snapped to attention and held their salute, sometimes as long as twenty minutes, as the victim was slowly carried to a waiting ambulance. As the body passed by, tears would flow, starting on one face and spreading akin. Then, the digging would begin again.

Buildings Five and Six of The World Trade Center creaked and shuddered as the workers dug, some for as long as 12 hours before resting. The smell of burnt flesh, smoke and dust filled the air. Sometimes a piece of debris would be moved and fire would flare up, delaying rescue efforts until the fire was extinguished. Water, which vaporized instantly, was constantly being thrown on the debris. The ground was so hot it sometimes melted boot soles. An airplane monitoring the temperature of Ground Zero thirteen days after the attack reported a core temperature exceeding 2,000 degrees. All the ruins removed from Ground Zero were taken to Staten Island and divided into three groups: building, mechanical and human remains. There was a room full of human feet – everything else had been pulverized when the buildings fell.

Each person was responsible for monitoring his own break and sleep time. Breaks were extremely short, if at all. Sleep for some came in two-hour intervals and was had on the floor of a nearby condemned building. Even though they were exhausted, they returned to do more digging. The volunteers who supplied food and drinks were described as phenomenal. There was not one basic need that they couldn't take care of. Many times, the workers did not even have to ask for any-

(Continued on page 12)

Remembrances of Tommy Bernal



Tommy with his sons at the Reston District Station Open House, October 28, 1995

“Early mornings at the Traffic Information Center and Vanilla Angel Donuts!”
Alex Craig, Emergency Management, OSB

As a new recruit I first met Tom 22 years ago. Already a veteran officer, he was proud of his mastery of the old skill of twirling his baton on its lanyard. He was distressed to learn the new recruits had been taught to leave the lanyards off. He loved the stuff that went with being a cop.

Steve Smylie, Captain, McLean District Station

When Captain Bernal was the Commander of the Reston District Station, I participated in the process for School Resource Officer. Although I was well suited for the job, another officer was chosen because he was more experienced. Captain Bernal promised me that before he left the Reston station, he would figure out a way to get me into a school. Months went by and Captain Bernal got word of his new assignment. I was certain he had forgotten me, but a week prior to leaving, he informed me I would be assigned to two middle schools. A man of his word! Thanks, Captain, for believing in me.

Gary Bailey, Detective, Criminal Investigations Bureau

“This was the partner you wanted when you needed help. This was the supervisor you wanted when you made a mistake. This was the commander you wanted when you ran into obstacles.”

Colonel J. Thomas Manger, Chief of Police

Many years ago, we were working midnights and Tom got a call to investigate a suspicious person at an abandoned house next to Demaine’s Funeral Home. He found a casket in the living room. Tom called for backup (after setting things up, of course!) We entered the house, carefully picking our way around holes in the floor. Tom shone his flashlight on the casket and mentioned there might be someone hiding inside. Just as we lifted the lid, he shut off his flashlight and yelled. He successfully scared the you-know-what out of us! The casket made its way back to the old Annandale station, where Tommy found a dummy to put inside and rigged the lid to open just as Ben Wiggins of the Property Room arrived to do the property run. The entire station saw Ben get the life scared out of him!

Tom always had a smile, didn’t mind a practical joke and had a sense of humor that’s needed in law enforcement.

Chip Moncure, Retired



Fire and Rescue personnel turned out to pay their respects to Captain Bernal during the procession to National Memorial Park.

For many years, the Police Department had a volleyball team that played in various county and recreational tournaments. Tom and Marlys Bernal were members of the team for at least three or four years in the mid 1980’s. Marlys was a natural athlete, but Tommy was also a pretty good player. We had a great time and won several championships.

Colonel J. Thomas Manger, Chief of Police



My friendship with Tommy began when we were assigned to the Technical Services Bureau. I was the bureau secretary and Tommy was a first lieutenant whose responsibilities included facility projects. Tommy was easygoing, very friendly, always had a smile on his face, and enjoyed talking about almost any subject. He had many interests. We struck it off from the very beginning.

The only time we disagreed was over the HVAC and I do not mean the repair of. I liked my office very warm in the winter and slightly cool in the summer. He liked it slightly warm in the winter and cold in the summer. He and Mary Lou Kegelman, the clerk typist who shared the office with me, came up with a solution. For my birthday, they presented me with a thermal top, white with pink flowers, with lace and a bow. All of us had a good laugh and I wore the thermal top often.



I am sharing for this remembrance two photographs. The first was taken on Tommy's 40th birthday, February 12, 1990. We decided his office needed a little decorating for the occasion. So, we hung signs, streamers and balloons, placed a "Lordy, Look Who's 40" tombstone and other "you are old" items on his desk, and borrowed a wheelchair from the property room for him to sit in. Not wanting to be too tough on him, we also had a cake. As you can tell by the smile on his face, Tommy appreciated our efforts.

The second photograph was taken at the last picnic hosted by the Technical Services Bureau at the old headquarters building. We decided one last gathering should be held before the administrative offices moved to the Massey Building in July 1992. Some of the retirees who had worked in the building were invited to join us. More than one hundred attended sharing old stories and friendship before headquarters became the police annex. Tommy helped plan the event, but his main duty that day, as at each picnic, was to cook the hot dogs and hamburgers. As you can tell by the picture, he was intent on everyone having plenty to eat.



Although Tommy and I did not work together, meaning at the same location, after the move to the Massey Building, he and I did work together. He was always available to assist me, as I was to assist him. Tommy was a good guy and I miss him.

Linda Puff, retired

On March 15, 1996, Captain Bernal (who was my commander at the time) received a telephone call from PSCC stating that my dad had died, and gave him the unfortunate task of relaying the information to me. I can only imagine how hard that must have been for him. When he called me into his office, I asked him what was wrong, and told him that he was scaring me because he looked as white as a ghost. He gave me the news and then the listened as I cried, yelled and banged my fists against the wall, and then on Tommy. He held me and comforted me, and then personally escorted me to my parents' home, where he stayed for several hours until he knew that we were all going to make it through the night. I would have never made it through that horrible day without him. I will never forget his caring, giving manner.

When he was my Captain, I used to get so mad when he wouldn't go through his inbox and get his work done in a timely manner so that I could get MY work done! He would just let it sit and sit, and that would just make me stew and stew! When I would get mad, he would joke with me, insisting that the work would get done eventually! And, eventually, it did!

Patti Smylie, Reston District Station

As we all know, Tommy Bernal was an avid motorcyclist. When I first met Tom in 1975, he was riding a Yamaha 750. We started taking motor jaunts together. But our luck was not always too good. This is the story one of those trips.

Many years ago, Tom and I took a ride to the Shenandoah National Park to visit a Park Ranger friend of Tom's. It was May, so we figured we'd have good weather and a scenic ride.

The trip out was gorgeous and the weather cool and sunny. We were headed for the Loft Mountain Campground since that's where the Ranger facilities were located, and Tom's Ranger friend put us up for the night.

I woke up the next morning in near darkness to a loud drumming sound. Tom was up and when I inquired about what was making that racket, he smiled and said RAIN. I crawled out of my sleeping bag and looked out the window. It wasn't raining, it was POURING. To top it off, it was so foggy that I couldn't see my bike parked next to the trailer.

We had to work midnights that night. We were the supervisors on the same squad, therefore, at least one of us had to get home that day. Tom and I looked at the weather and he asked if I had rain gear. I had a rain jacket but had left my pants at home. I also had a leather jacket. He had no rain gear and only a light jacket. He suggested we go down to the camp store and see what sort of rainsuits they had. Since he had no gear at all, I earned that dubious honor.

I went outside to start my bike and discovered that in addition to rain and fog, it was also COLD! Naturally, I had trouble starting my bike (which didn't like COLD or WET). By the time I started down to the store I was already on my way to drenched, leather and raincoat not withstanding. Of course, the

(Continued on page 8)



Remembering (Continued from page 7)

store didn't have much. I found a disposable raincoat and bought that for Tom. As we packed up and got ready to go, I knew it was going to be a long day. But what the heck, we only had to go about 120 miles. How bad could that be? Beside, I believed the storm had come from the southwest, and maybe we'd ride out of it.

So, off we set. The fog seemed to thicken as we went north on Skyline Drive. Tom was in the lead, and all I could usually see was his taillight. I couldn't see the side of the road or the edges of those cliffs we were passing. It occurred to me that the first sign I would have of our imminent demise would be Tom's taillight dropping out of sight just before I went off the edge after him.

I soon learned that leather jackets and fairings with windshields were nice. Both offered some protection from the rain. Full-face helmets were not. My faceplate fogged up, but since I couldn't see much anyway, it didn't really matter. Tom, though had none of these protections. All he had was the rapidly disintegrating, throwaway raincoat.

After about 10 miles, we stopped at an overlook (it didn't "overlook" much in that fog!) and decided to get off Skyline Drive, get off the mountain, and head down toward Stanardsville and US-29. We hoped that would get us out of the fog and perhaps the rain.

In Stanardsville, we stopped at the hardware store but found little. We got rubber gloves but no rain gear. The only positive development was that we had left the fog up on the mountain. I was soaked from the waist down and had water pooling in my boots. I had given up on my face-shield and had opened it. My sunglasses kept the rain out of my eyes. Unfortunately, the open front let the rain into my helmet. Even with that, Tom was far worse. He was way past soaked. But Tom was tough. Off we set again.

The rain and cold persisted, but we soon developed a routine. Go about 10 to 15 miles and then stop to warm up. I think we stopped at every store along 29 in the fruitless pursuit of rain gear. Tom was so wet and cold that he told me at one of our stops that if he wrecked all I would hear would be a huge sigh of relief. I concurred. Finally, somewhere around Culpeper, we found a motorcycle dealer and stopped once again. They had no rain gear, but Tom was also showing the strain of the cold and wet. He offered his motorcycle to the salesman for a ride home. The

guy thought he was kidding, though and declined. Tom wasn't kidding, but didn't persist. He mumbled something about giving up motorcycles.

We came through Warrenton at dusk and stopped at the KFC for another "warming" session and to eat. I knew we were in trouble, though when Tom pulled into his parking place. He stopped his bike, but didn't put his foot down. Instead the bike slowly tipped over with him on it. I pulled in beside him and almost fell on top of him. We could just barely move our legs. I think it took about 5 minutes to warm up enough to actually walk into the restaurant. I think we spent an hour there trying to get warm. We had a serious discussion about finding a motel and both calling in sick. We weren't sure we were going to make the final 40 miles to home.

When we left, we were still wet and frigid but felt better. We made the last leg without stopping. It took us about seven hours to go 120 miles - not too impressive! I went home, undressed in the bathtub and poured two inches of water out of my boots. We both made it to roll call that night, though we didn't look top form.

Tom and I talked about that ride ever since. Rarely a month went by when we didn't joke about "motors in the rain." I'll never forget the view of him riding down US-29 in his shredded raincoat, looking miserable but as determined as ever. We certainly learned the meaning of wet!

Jim Covel, retired Major

Pentagon (Continued from page 1)

that wound in the side of what I think most people considered one of the most secure buildings in the world. Our command bus was literally parked on the helipad. We had several armed officers assigned to guard our bus. It occurred to me that I should be nervous, but all I could feel was sadness and disbelief. We got out and walked to the building and stood there at the base of it. It was surreal. It almost seemed that we were watching a movie instead of real life. The tragedy kept washing over us in waves. We watched a television inside the bus and kept seeing newer and more horrific images. When you work in the public safety field, you really feel the loss when a fireman or policeman is killed in the line of duty, whether it is in your jurisdiction or another. It comes from the nature of our job. Day in and day out as a dispatcher, you are responsible for the safety of police officers and firefighters and when one is lost, you can identify with

all the people involved. It hurts you deeply. There is a kind of brotherhood among people who do this kind of work. I can't even imagine what it must be like to be a member of a department that loses 300 members. Nor can I imagine where you start to grieve.

I talked with a captain from our fire department on the grounds of the Pentagon who is a member of the search and rescue team. He said that they made entry into some of the offices that are to the right of the "hole." They found 24 bodies in the offices they could access. He said there was a group of four people sitting around a table, still looking at a television --all instantly dead from their burns. They left them all in place until the FBI could photograph and document and gather evidence. He said there is no chance anybody is still alive in there. Nobody in this country will ever be the same after this, but for the men and women who actually have to go into those buildings and carry those people out, I just can't imagine.

The FBI area in front of the Pentagon was an eerie sight. There were hundreds of cardboard boxes and plastic tubs lined up to be packed with evidence. Large and small pieces of the airplane were laying on the ground waiting to be sorted. There were several jurisdictions there. Groups of personnel hung out everywhere, alternating in their efforts and rest periods. Food was instantly delivered to our communication center and the Pentagon by local businesses. People lined up around the block to donate blood at the hospital near our center. It was a six hour wait to donate. They say everyone stayed.

There is a police officer who worked with us in the center. His sister works in the World Trade Center and his brother is a NYC firefighter. As of midnight last night, he hadn't heard from either of them. It is all so hard to think about. He said he couldn't stay home, so he came in to work with us, to feel like he was a part of something being done. We sat and watched as they raised three fire chiefs up in a basket to get an aerial view of the roof. Once they were finished with their overview, they were lowered so that one could reach over and hang a second American flag from the front of the building. I saw several Green Berets and Marines next to our bus get up from where they were leaning against their gear bags and salute that flag as it was hung there. It was very emotional for everyone watching, and one of the images that stuck in my mind.

(Continued on page 9)

I arrived home after spending all night watching that hole in the Pentagon, being able to see into offices where one wall was completely gone. Computers were still visible on desks. It almost looked like a dollhouse, where you can see into it, and it seemed like somebody still lived there. In other office windows, the glass was not shattered but melted, oozing down like candle wax.

I should be sleeping, but somehow can't. It somehow seems wrong not to be there, when there are things I am trained to do that could be helpful. It was tough to come home and now that I am home, I am having to force myself to stay here and try to rest. May God bless all those feeling pain from this.

9-13-01

I have been sitting here reading through all the emails of encouragement and hope and patriotism. Somehow each one is a little bit of salve. With another day, and being able to finally get some sleep yesterday after writing my thoughts down, I thought I would try to assemble some more coherent thoughts for those who wrote to tell me that they appreciated my email yesterday.

It still doesn't seem real. We kept saying that to each other as we sat there staring into that gaping hole. We kept saying it out loud, "This is the PENTAGON for God's sake!" What an incredible gift our sense of security and freedom has been....and it slowly kept sinking in that we were looking at one of the reasons that those feelings are forever changed. More images from that scene come to my mind, and I feel a need to somehow document them for myself while they are still fresh. Anyone who knows me knows how I have such a strong need to talk about everything that affects me, a need to talk and a need to write.

One small glimmer in all of this was a fax that came into our fire dispatch center last night. A former Fairfax County firefighter had gone to join NYC's fire department and he was one of the first on the scene that Tuesday morning. He was also one of those among the missing when the towers collapsed. He was one of the four firefighters that was rescued six hours later in a stairwell, having been trapped in a pocket of air and cramped space. The fax told us they each had been pulled out and at the time the fax was sent to us, he was back at the scene, digging and scraping with the rest of his firefighter brothers to

find those still in there. How do you describe that kind of heroism? It's not that these people don't feel fear, it's that in spite of their fear, they push on. What an amazing and incredible show of strength and fortitude and human spirit by each and every one of the rescuers. They are lowering their shoulders and by sheer force of will and determination, they push forward, one brick at a time. In the face of unsafe conditions and air that is painful to breathe, dust that settles on the eyeballs so that just the act of blinking causes abrasions on the surface. Think how it must feel facing a pile of rubble that is formed from 110 stories of steel and brick and glass hitting the ground--and yet, they focus their eyes on the piece of metal in front of them--and they move it aside, and then they move the next one and the next one. I know they don't see it, but let them somehow know that they are heroes.

I saw other heroes out there, at the Impact Zone. A large flat-bed semi-truck pulled up with a load of lumber that the rescuers needed to shore up the sagging walls of the Pentagon. The driver jumped out, reached back into his cab and pulled out two plastic milk jugs full of coffee and a sleeve of styrofoam cups. He started walking the grounds. I watched him stop and ask everyone he saw if they would like a cup of coffee, offering cups and pouring for them as they sat or stood away from the building. He was a middle aged man, with a long ponytail and an unruly beard and many tattoos. But that morning, in his world, in his house, he found a way he could do something. I could imagine him brewing pot after pot of coffee, finding something to carry it in and assembling his care package. How do you not feel that somehow we will all be okay when you see things like that? I saw top brass hold their cups as he poured his hot coffee from his plastic milk jug. I hope that truck driver knows he is a hero.

As first light began to dawn, a man wearing a business suit stuck out among the crowd. When he came close I could see he was carrying the long silk scarf that a priest wears around his neck. He had a bottle of holy water and they were walking him up to the face of the building so that he could bless the wreckage and most probably administer last rites. It was impossible to NOT have the point driven home that there were PEOPLE in that horrific pile of twisted metal and concrete. I hadn't realized that I was avoiding considering that, or at least trying to.

The media is being kept pretty far

away, across the interstate. Most of the views I have seen don't really convey how many people and how much equipment is camped out around the helipad. It is an assortment of Red Cross tents with cots for the rescuers to find what rest they can. Many of them just sleep where they drop, close to their engines or tents. There are hundreds of pieces of fire fighting equipment all over the grounds. Support people wander through the encampment, leaving cases of bottled water in piles on the ground for whomever needs them. They carry in boxes and boxes of pizzas donated by local businesses, dropping them off at various points to whomever they pass. No rescuer ever has to go in search of food or water. These volunteers seek out everyone. Sometimes wordlessly, they put a bottle of water in the hands of a fireman as he takes off his helmet and slumps to the ground. No words, no "thank yous." It's not necessary. They each know that the other's efforts are appreciated. No energy can be wasted on niceties. There is too much other important work to be finished. Other volunteers go from tent to tent, engine to engine, truck to truck knocking on windows, "Would you like a hot egg sandwich?" "Take an apple and a banana." They dispense the strength to go on. I hope they know they are heroes.

And in the midst of all this, all those flashing lights, all those people whose uniforms and weapons and equipment seem to roar with might and power, it was eerily quiet. There was the background sound of some generators running; an occasional motor starting up when a piece of equipment was moved. But in all, it was a hushed place. It struck me as soon as I walked in, no sirens, no loudspeakers, no one shouting. I gradually came to see that there was no place for much talking, no energy to be spared on that, and yet it wasn't the sound of defeat or hopelessness. It was the sound of fierce determination.

The policeman that I talked about yesterday? His sister was found last night, in a hospital with a broken shoulder. She will survive. He said his family feels guilty with their rejoicing, and yet the fact that there is reason for them to rejoice is the only thing keeping the rescuers going, keeping the country going. As for the firefighter, it is his nephew, not his brother. But he is still missing.

I was walking through the parking lot on the south side of the Pentagon, away from the crash site, just needing to be apart from what was going on and it slowly

Pentagon (Continued from page 9)

dawned on me that the cars that remained parked there most likely belonged to people who were still in that building, in that wreckage. So I stopped and began to look inside of them, and I touched them. It slowly began to overwhelm me. The minivan with a child's car seat in the back, and I knew that somebody's mother was in that building. There was a black car with a man's raincoat draped over the passenger seat and a picture of a smiling middle aged woman hanging from the radio knob, and I knew that somebody's husband was in that building. Then there was the cute little Sunfire with a tassel from a graduation hat and a charm that said '98 and I knew that somebody's daughter was in there. I hope they all know they are heroes.

In the communications center where I work, everyone has a calm and firm resolve. I heard someone sitting beside me talking to a family member who had called her at work. She said, "I can't cry with you now, I have to keep working." I think that pretty much says it best. But we wouldn't be in the line of work we are in if we weren't caregivers by nature. Every single one of us cries until there are no tears left when we leave. We have all admitted to crying all the way to work and all the way home from work, but we know that people depend on us to hold it together when we are there. So know that about those firemen and policemen and rescuers, they do that because they care, because they are driven by the need to help. They are affected to their souls. They never get hardened to it.

One other thing I want to add. Several of the members of the Urban Search and Rescue team and people I work with were sitting near their tent. As a friend was describing what they had seen when they went into the offices that hadn't collapsed, but had been incinerated. I reached out and touched his hand and said "I can't imagine what that does to you, to see that. But you have got to feel the prayers and the good thoughts of a country around you here." He looked at me and said, "The guys were talking last night about how you really CAN feel it, how it feels like a blanket around the whole area, like it's a physical thing." I knew just what he meant. I swear you can feel it. You know it, and you feel protected by it. So don't ever say, "All I can do is pray and send you my thoughts." That is what recharges them! That is what feeds them! If you paused and said a prayer, if you put a dollar in a jar, if you dropped off a box of

food at a collection site, if you listened patiently to someone pour out their feelings and their pain to you, then I hope you know you are a hero.

While I have tried to avoid anger or harsh words through this, I just wanted to repeat something I heard Senator John McCain say yesterday. I hope it becomes the mantra for those in a position to respond to these attacks. When asked his feelings for those who had created this evil in America, he said, "May God have mercy on their souls, because we won't." I will be sending a few more emails after this one with some pictures attached that we took while at the Pentagon. Know that is what is in the emails, and make your own decision about whether to open them and look at it. There are none that show any victims, only the building--and they aren't the greatest quality--but I thought there might be those who would like to see them. What they show is history; it is the single biggest reason that we are all forever changed.

9-16-01

I finished my four-day shift at work on Friday morning and experienced a bit of a meltdown. I guess I hadn't realized that I was sort of holding my breath. I was not letting myself be swallowed up by what I was feeling, because each morning when I came home I knew that I would have to go back to work that night. I couldn't really let myself fall apart. Once I was home and knew that I wouldn't be back at work at the 911 center for several days, I was able to sob out what I had been holding back. Only then I was finally able to sleep.

I have been writing down my observations of what I have seen and what I have been involved with through all of this. I want to share with everyone a link in this chain of survival and rescue that doesn't get a lot of attention....the communications center workers. This is the field in which I work and I have to tell you, the people in New York and Arlington lived through, and continue to survive, the worst experience of their careers and most likely their lives.

When you work in a communications center, you make your living listening to people's problems, complaints and tragedies. One after another. When help is needed, it is initiated, directed, monitored, and recorded by public safety call takers and dispatchers. Requests from the units in the field for services, assistance, additional equipment and much more are handled by the dispatchers as major incidents

unfold. Having said all that, and having been the dispatcher on several very large fires in our jurisdiction, I can not even BEGIN to imagine the stress, the pressure, the chaos and the absolute horror that must have found its way into those communications centers. Yet I know that anyone looking would not have seen that. I know that those people buckled down and worked at the highest level of their skill. They maintained their composure and worked hour after hour while they listened to the horror of the situation coming through their headsets.

I'll start by talking a little bit about what went on in the communications center in which I work. My sister called that morning to wake me up. I had just gone to bed after working the night shift. She told me to turn on my television. We stayed on the phone together while we watched the events unfold. We kept asking each other "What does this mean?" "How could this happen?" When they announced that a plane had struck the Pentagon, I suddenly realized that I was no longer a spectator. Our center was going to be involved in this tragedy. I told my sister that I had to hang up the phone and take a shower and get ready, because I knew I would be getting a call. Once I knew that I was heading into our center, I called my sister back. I remember holding the phone for a few minutes before I dialed, thinking what I needed to say. I told her that I didn't want to be dramatic, but that there were things I needed to tell her. I told her I would leave the door of my apartment unlocked, and that if anything happened, all the papers she would need would be where she could find them. I told her that there was a special provision in our life insurance at work that if our death was caused by terrorists, the benefit was multiplied six times. There started to be a tremor in both our voices and even though I felt there were a hundred other things I needed to say, I couldn't give myself that luxury just then. We said our "I love yous," and hung up. I called a couple more friends, again with some things I needed them to do for me "just in case," and then I began to drive in the direction of the Pentagon, stopping ten minutes short of that location at our communications center around 10 a.m.

I drove like a crazy woman on the interstate. I knew from the news reports on the television that three planes had found targets. I kept thinking, "Is it over? Will

(Continued on page 11)

Pentagon (Continued from page 10)

this go on for days? Are we at war?" I had brought a clean uniform and a toothbrush with me, not sure when I would be coming home again. I suspected that if anything happened to the police and fire communications in D.C., we may be called upon to shoulder some of that telephone and radio traffic.

When I opened the doors, there was the hum of activity in the room, and an energy level that seemed to suck me in and swallow me up. I tried to make that familiar feeling come over me, that feeling that becomes instinctual when you have worked at a 911 center. You make a conscious effort to remain calm. One of the things that we are taught in training is that when someone you are talking to on the phone is hysterical or describing something horrible, you keep telling yourself, "This is not my emergency." You force yourself to remain calm by reminding yourself that you are safe, that you are not in the car that has rolled over. It is not your loved one having a heart attack. That may sound cold, but as the person who needs to give instruction and send help, we cannot be in a panic or rattled. But that morning, in this case, this WAS our emergency. We were NOT safe. Nobody was. There were so many people in the center. Every phone, computer and radio technician was there, setting up extra terminals and standing by for any eventuality. Management personnel worked furiously to get the efforts of so many coordinated. Every dispatch terminal had two dispatchers plugged into the radio so that no radio traffic was missed or heard incorrectly. Many of our fire resources had already been dispatched to Arlington to help with the scene at the Pentagon. Every face had grim determination; every call taker, every dispatcher, every supervisor. While everyone's instinct is to throw themselves completely into this horrendous situation, the county still had citizens who needed us. There was a still a need to send an ambulance for the child having a seizure. There was still the need to send a police officer to check the burglar alarm sounding at a residence. I took a call from a woman whose husband was in severe pain for reasons unknown to her and she was trying to rush him to a hospital but couldn't get through traffic to a hospital. So while it felt like the ONLY thing happening in the world that was of any consequence filled our television screens and

occurred just down the street, there were people who still needed us to do our jobs. My assignment became one of insuring everyone got up and took a break, took the time to get something to drink and walk away for a minute. Without exception, as I walked up to each position to relieve a call taker or dispatcher, they said, "Oh no thanks, I'm fine. I'll stay." I had to tell them it was a direct order. They HAD to go. I stayed for four hours and then went home to get some rest, so I could come back in at 11 that night, for what would be my assignment at the Pentagon.

The reason I describe all this is to maybe begin to help us all understand what it must have been like in that communications center in New York City and Arlington. The calls they must have taken. The things they must have heard. My heart aches when I think of what they listened to. How many thousands of people dialed 911, people on the streets, people in the buildings. In this era of cell phones, we get 20 phone calls on an accident on the beltway. The number of calls from these horrible acts had to be in the hundreds or thousands.

Those people were working a typical Tuesday morning, and then, with no warning, Hell descended upon them. Call takers in New York City heard the last words people spoke on this Earth. People who were strangers to them, but will now forever be a part of their lives. When you work in public safety, you believe everyone can be saved. You have to believe that. You calm hysterical people and with steady and reassuring tones you urge them to keep doing CPR, refusing to believe that anything is hopeless. We feel it when somebody we talked to or tried to help on the phone doesn't make it. We learn to cope, but we feel it. I can only begin to think of the burden those people who answered those calls are carrying by speaking to one person after the other that they couldn't help, both in New York and at the Pentagon. To have tried to be calm for them, to reassure them, to think of what was the right thing to say, especially as the full realization of what was happening became clearer and clearer to them. Then there were dispatchers who were trying to understand and assist the personnel in the field, to listen to their radio traffic and somehow keep some kind of track of what was going on. As a dispatcher, the most important part of your job is officer and

firefighter safety. When a firefighter announces on the radio that they are about to enter a building in an attempt to reach somebody trapped, or when an officer announces they are in foot pursuit of a felony subject, it makes every fiber of your being focus on that situation. Your training kicks in and you go through the needed steps to ensure they have enough help, backup and equipment. You listen to every syllable so that you can help them when they need you. Everything we do in our job is centered around their safety. We check on officers on traffic stops after five minutes to make sure they are okay. We remind the battalion chief in charge of a fire that it's time to do a "par check," to be sure all firefighters are accounted for. The dispatchers who were sending more and more rescuers to the scene that was spinning out of control at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were doing it with dread in their heart. As much as every surviving police officer and firefighter is mourning the loss of 300 of their brothers, so are the people who sent them there with their radios and listened as it happened. Though I don't have direct knowledge, I know that those people worked around the clock. I know they had to be dragged out of their seats and MADE to take a break. When this emergency slows down for them, they are going to feel their pain with their own brand of sorrow. So, please please, remember how powerful your prayers are and remember THEM in your prayers as well. Each of your prayers is another thread in that blanket that surrounds everyone in this tragedy. Let your prayers weave a blanket big enough to wrap around the rescue workers, the victims and those people who were listening when those first reports came in and who listened to those firemen and policemen announce that they were responding but will not be returning to quarters. Their spirits are bent far beyond the point where many would have broken, but I know that they are holding on, because it is their job and because they know they are needed and necessary. Don't stop praying for a long time. Don't let the blanket unravel just when they can start to breathe again and need the comfort most of all. Mark it on your calendar to remind yourself to pause and pray for them next week, next month, next year. They need you, too.

Lori Lewis is a three-year member of the police department.



A search and rescue dog searched for victims.

Photo by APO Tim Scott

Thoughts (Continued from page 5)

thing. The volunteers seemed to always be in the right place at the right time with the right item.

Although each had their own personal, private reasons, ones they would not or could not share, for making the journey to Ground Zero, the resounding theme was that each one wanted to somehow help. None wanted glory or recognition. "We gotta go," is what they said. Each expressed their need to lend a hand, to help rescue one of 4,000 poor souls or "to dig out one of my own." The officer who lost a cousin attended his funeral. His best friend, who was able to make one last telephone call to his wife before the North Tower collapsed, is still among the missing. Some attended memorial services. Others tried to put themselves in the place of a lost friend, trying to imagine how a person so close would have reacted during the attack and collapse. One officer received a "thank you" letter from an 11 year old girl. His children now have a pen pal and new friend. The officers returned beat up and tired from their experience, but it was best summed up by this quote: "Out of the darkest moment of human life also came the brightest. It was the worst time of my life and the best time of my life."



The Memorial Wall at Fire Station 10 in New York City.

Photo by APO Tim Scott

Fairfax County Police Department
Public Information Office
4100 Chain Bridge Road
Fairfax, VA 22030

PRST STD
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT 45
FAIRFAX, VA